FY 2019
SMALL NEPA PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Please **do not leave any field BLANK**, unless it does not apply.
Submit form (Word doc) electronically to jjchynoweth@fs.fed.us by **November 1, 2019.**

(NOTE: Italicized / red comments are for reference only. You may delete them after completing form.)

Project Name	Lost Toboggan
District Name (or "Forestwide")	North Fork / Lochsa-Powell RD
County where project located?	Clearwater and Idaho Counties
FS Personnel Name, Phone Number and Email *If a partnership, please add name, phone and email; however, **an FS employee MUST BE the project proponent** and point of contact.*	Theodore Peterson 208-476-8257 theodore.peterson@usda.gov Neal Cox 208-926-6424 neal.cox@usda.gov
Legal Location *Township(s), Range(s), and Section(s) of project.*	T37N R11E Sections 1-3, 10-15, 22-24 T37N R12E Sections 1-11, 16-19 T38N R11E Sections PB37-PB39, 10-14, 22-27, 33-36 T38N R12E Sections PB41-42, 7-36 T38N R13E Secs 9-16, PB39-43, 19, 22-24, 26, 27, 29-32 T39N R11E Sections 25-26, PB44, PB45 T39N R12E Sections 30, PB47-48 T39N R13E Sections 2-4
District Ranger / Line Officer's Name *Person(s) responsible for signing the decision document*	Andrew Skowlund Brandon Knapton
Is the project associated with meeting a Forest target?	Yes, Hazardous Fuels
Which CE Category does this project fit? *Provide citation: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(x)* *See below regarding 220.6(d)(x) projects.*	36 CFR 220.6 (e)(6)

This block does not have to completed if submitting a 36 CFR 220.6 (e) category project.

A Project Record or written Decision are not required for projects for 36 CFR 220.6 (d) categories except at the Decision Maker's discretion.

***IF** being submitted under 36 CFR 220.6 (d)*, does the Decision Maker want a written Decision?

Yes No

*If no, this form **does not** need to be filled out nor submitted to the Small NEPA planner.*

If yes, provide the category above, complete the remainder of this form and have Decision Maker submit it to the Small NEPA planner.

At what level does the Decision Maker want the project scoped?

Internal___ External*_X__

Internal scoping will be through the Small NEPA IDT, unless otherwise specified. Scoping would be documented in the Extraordinary Circumstances Checklist.

*External scoping will be with the public via a scoping letter, a legal notice, and the scoping letter posted on the NPCWNF website. The Project will only be scoped to the Tribe(s) et al (see * below), unless otherwise specified.*

**For external scoping, please to complete block below. Provide NA if no additional publics are to be scoped.*

Provide a list of the individuals, groups, agencies, etc. (other than those listed below*) with their mailing address and/or email address, of those who will be included for *external* Scoping.

- DO NOT provide only a name.
- DO NOT leave this box blank: If no additional individuals et al are to be **externally scoped** please enter N/A.

Montana DEQ – Liz Ulrich (Air Quality Planning)-1520 E Sixth Ave, Helena, MT 59620
Missoula County Air Quality and Health Dept. – Sarah Coefield – scoefield@missoulacounty.us
Great Burn Study Group – 1434 Jackson St. Missoula, MT 59802
Robert Denney - Triple O Horse Powered Adventures, 251 South Gersam Av., Hamilton, OH 45013

** The following will be included for all SN externally scoped projects: Nez Perce Tribe, Coeur d'Alene Tribe (North Zone only), Friends of the Clearwater, Idaho Conservation League, American Forest Resource Council, Idaho Wildlife Federation, IDFG – Clearwater Region, Thomas E. Peterson, Bill Mulligan, Gregg Winkler, Phil/Jean Poxleitner (Red River only)*

Does the Decision Maker want a Legal Notice published in the Lewiston Tribune? Yes* _X_ No ___

** The scoping period will start the day after the LN is published.*

What Level of Analysis (below) does the Decision Maker want for the Project?

__X___ **Low level:** If the project's level of public scrutiny is projected to be relatively low or unknown, the line officer chooses who we would contact for scoping (limited). In this case specialists would only do the checklist for each project. Documentation for low level analysis projects would be a completed checklist filled out by the specialists, including the name of the specialist who performed the analysis, the project name, and date it was completed. No other written documentation would be generated.

_____ **Moderate level:** If the project's level of public scrutiny is projected to be relatively moderate to high, then the line officer chooses who we would contact for scoping (a little broader). In this case, specialists would complete the checklist with the only write up being for items that are present and the rationale for the effects call. No write up would be given for items in the checklist that are not present. If the determination is no effect (which generally speaking, most CE's should have zero to very little adverse effects), then document why that determination was made in one paragraph or less. If the determination is an adverse effect, then why that determination was made would be written in less three paragraphs.

List the Management Area(s) in which your project is located.

B2, C3, C4, C6, E1, US

What are the desired conditions (*relevant to your project*) for the Management Area(s) listed above?

B2 Goals: Use prescribed fire to treat activity fuels or natural fuel loading if needed and to provide insect and disease control. Any actions proposed in this project are intended to maintain the area as potential wilderness. No ground disturbing activities are proposed.

C3 Goals: Provide winter forage and thermal cover for big game. Break up continuous fuel beds to remove barriers of big-game movement, and to improve forage.

C4 Goals: Manage big-game winter range to provide sufficient forage and cover for existing and projected big-game populations and achieve timber production outputs.

C6 Goals: Protect soil and water from adverse effects of man's activities. Use prescribed fire from planned and unplanned ignition as needed to achieve Forest Plan direction.

E1 Goals: Provide optimum, sustained production of wood products. Timber production is to be cost effective and provide adequate protection of soil and water quality. Manage viable elk populations within areas of historic elk use based on physiological and ecological needs.

US Goals: Manage for resources other than timber such as dispersed recreation, and big-game summer range as appropriate.

Is the project in an Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA)? (Yes*) No

If yes, which one?

Hoodoo (Wild Land Recreation) and Bighorn-Weitas (Backcountry Restoration/Special Area of Historic or Tribal Significance)

** Fill in the 'Project in Roadless Area' table below, AND complete a Briefing Paper . Provide the completed Briefing Paper to the Environmental Coordinator and Brian Riggers PRIOR TO SCOPING.*

Is the project in a congressionally designated area, ex. Wilderness Area, Wild & Scenic River Corridor, Research Natural Area, Historic Trail, etc.? (Yes*) No

If yes, which one(s)?

Lolo Motorway, talked with Steve Lucas 10/29/19.

** For projects that occur in a **Wilderness Area**, contact Carol Hennessey, carol.hennessey@usda.gov, 935-4270, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.*

** For projects that occur in a **Wild and Scenic River Corridor**, contact Chris Noyes, chris.noyes@usda.gov, 935-4289, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.*

** For projects that occur in a **Research Natural Area**, contact Mike Hays, mike.hays@usda.gov, 935-4285, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.*

** For projects that occur in the **Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark**, contact Steve Lucas, steve.lucas@usda.gov, 963-4212, BEFORE submitting this proposal, to discuss how the project may affect the designated area.*

Are there Floodplains or Wetlands in the project area? (Yes) No

Are there Municipal Watersheds in the project area? Yes (No)

If yes, which one?

Is the project located in an RHCA? (Yes) No

What is the Purpose and Need for the proposed action*?

Vegetative Successional Stages

Purpose: Restore vegetative successional stages across the analysis area to a more natural condition, recognizing historical patch sizes and locations.

Need: The current distribution of vegetative successional stages can mostly be attributed to two events: (1) a series of catastrophic fires in this area during the period 1910-1934, which established a near-uniform starting point for natural plant succession across broad landscapes; and (2) wildfire prevention and control during the past six decades, which nearly eliminated the role of fire to fragment these uniform stands of vegetation. The interaction of these events has resulted in a reduction of the late seral stages, an unnatural abundance of the mid seral stages, and a lack of early seral vegetation relative to normal conditions (i.e., distributions which would have appeared naturally at these elevations in a wildfire-dominated landscape).

The Forest Plan goal to "provide habitat for viable populations of all indigenous wildlife species" (Clearwater Forest Plan, page II-2) emphasizes the need for habitat diversity. Since wildlife is a product of the interaction between topography, climate and vegetation, the unnatural distribution of successional stages across broad areas of the landscape has had important implications for many wildlife species that rely on one or more of the successional stages for their habitat. For example, elk, moose, white-tailed deer, snowshoe hares, and rodents rely on early seral grasses, forbs, and shrubs - vegetation that has become increasingly scarce. Some of these species, such as moose and elk, also find cover in old forest habitats, which are marginally distributed and key to such species as pileated and black-backed woodpeckers, pine marten, fisher, and flammulated owls. Finally, the abundance of prey species, found mostly in the early successional stage, has an effect on the predators (lynx, gray wolf, and wolverine) that feed on such species.

In addition, a balanced distribution of successional stages is more resilient to disturbances than the present distribution. The lack of early seral stages and bulge of mid seral stages is creating the potential for large scale, catastrophic wildfires more intense than typical wildfires. These events would have major detrimental impacts to soils and aquatic systems, which would be contrary to the Forest Plan goal to "insure that soil productivity is maintained and no irreversible damage occurs to soil and water resources..." (Clearwater Forest Plan, page II-3).

There are numerous other resource goals and objectives in the Forest Plan (refer to pages II-1 through II-8) that support restoring a natural distribution of successional stages, which is essential in meeting these same goals and objectives.

Natural Processes

Purpose: Actively restore fire to maintain healthy ecosystems and reduce the risk of widespread catastrophic wildfire.

Need: Historically, fire was the major agent of change within the Toboggan, Upper Cayuse, and Middle Cayuse watersheds. Periodic wildland fire maintained vegetative structure and composition, regulated understory vegetative growth, and allowed seral, fire dependent species to dominate the landscape. These statements are directly linked to the Forest Plan goal of "...recognizing the role of fire in ecological processes" (Clearwater Forest Plan, page II-4).

Fire exclusion, due to decades of aggressive fire suppression and very limited use of prescribed fire in some areas, has caused a shift from open stands of Douglas-fir, western white pine, and ponderosa pine to dense stands of non-fire adapted tree species (grand fir, western red cedar, and subalpine fir). This is most evident on the south facing break lands, which may have missed several fire disturbances. This increases the risk of a stand replacing fire event, especially due to increasingly fuel accumulations from western

Describe the Existing Condition of the project area.

The Lost Toboggan project area consists of prescribed burn areas from a project 15 years ago (10,777 acres), high intensity wildfires from 2003, 2006, 2011, and 2012 (7,900 acres), and areas that have had fire exclusion since the big fire event of 1910 (39,945 acres).

The prescribed burn areas from the Toboggan project in 2005 have returned to advanced Lodgepole Pine regeneration, some brush, and a heavy dead and down component as the standing dead have begun to fall down. Some of these fuels concentrations are similar to a Fuel Model 12 (moderate to heavy logging slash).

The areas that have seen high intensity wildfire have regenerated back to heavy brush, heavy dead and down, and some conifer regeneration. Again, the fuels concentrations are similar to a Fuel Model 12 (moderate to heavy logging slash) in areas where the burned stand has degraded and fallen to the ground.

The rest of the project area has had fire excluded since the big event of 1910. Since 1910, there has been an increase in Douglas fir, Grand fir, and western red cedar at lower elevations while lodgepole pine and sub-alpine fire have come back in higher elevations. Currently, this landscape is dominated by relatively large, homogeneous patches of middle-aged forests. Few areas of young forest have been created by either wildfire or prescribed fire. The Southwest corner of the project area near Moon Creek and Howard Creek have no recorded fire history.

Describe the Proposed Action

The Lost Toboggan project would reintroduce fire into this fire adapted ecosystem to begin reversing the trends caused from past fire suppression and reduce the risk of large, severe wildfires.

Under this proposal, prescribed fire will be applied to 22 units with a total of 8,277 acres identified as ignition areas within the 55,227 acre project area. (15% of the project area) The purpose of these treatments will be to encourage early seral vegetative growth, reduce hazardous fuel buildup associated with the insect and disease outbreaks, minimize fuel loadings, reduce fuel continuity and reduce the potential for fire to spread into timber management areas and the Lolo National Forest.

Vegetation characteristics, elevation, and topographic differences have been used to determine burn area and extent. Burn units were designed to avoid bare rock, designated old growth, soils susceptible to erosion, and riparian areas to the extent possible. However, some of these features occur as inclusions within burn areas. It is not the intent to ignite within these inclusions, but it is likely that fire will creep into them in places. However based on what we have observed it is highly unlikely that total fuel consumption will even come close to being reached. See Design Features below for further explanation on measures that would be implemented to minimize impacts to these areas.

During prescribed fire ignition we use our knowledge of the area, aspect, and current fuel conditions (i.e. moistures, loadings, and continuity) to determine the most appropriate places to start our ignitions. Traditionally we will ignite the ridge tops on the favorable aspects and allow the prescribed fire to back down the ridge lines and into drainages. We do not anticipate more than 40 to 60% of any unit to burn.

It is important to note that our goal is to mimic natural fire, thus creating a mosaic pattern on the landscape. We do this by introducing fire with low to moderate fire intensities into the burn units. If we experience intensities higher than we desire, we stop ignitions immediately.

Table 1: Probable burn acres within the Lost Toboggan Project Area

Burn Unit	Unit Acres	Proposed Ignition Areas in Acres
1	2088	323
2	1633	603
3	2100	396
4	2402	703
5	2248	379
6	2876	1209
7	2555	393
8	3129	287
9	1768	309
10	2343	363
11	2101	14
12	3894	208
13	3244	401
14	2904	89
15	1515	86
16	2570	138
17	2529	201
18	3007	375
19	1189	571
20	3612	417
21	3753	363
22	1767	447
Total	**55,227**	**8,277**

None of the units will be entirely ignited and none of the units are expected to burn in their entirety. For example, ignitions are not targeting areas of young forest or older forest, nor are these areas expected to burn to any great extent. Table 1 shows the treatment units and the approximate area that is expected to burn within each unit. Table 2 refers to the acres associated with each proposed ignition area. While not every acre will burn, the entire unit will have benefitted from the fire effects as a result of increased vegetative diversity.

The proposal would be accomplished by Forest Service personnel using a series of spring/summer/fall burns (using hand and/or aerial ignition) over a 5-15 year period. Fire would be introduced under predetermined weather conditions to allow mixed severity fire to treat large-scale areas within the project area. Fire would be applied to pre-identified areas; once this fire is established, it would be allowed to move and spread until a significant weather event occurs. It is expected that fire will remain active and continue to

Table 2: Proposed ignition units within the Lost Toboggan Project Area

Proposed Ignition Areas	Proposed Ignition Area Acres	Proposed Ignition Areas	Proposed Ignition Area Acres
1	40	35	121
2	130	36	31

List the Design Criteria / Mitigation Measures * to be included with the Proposed Action.

1. All proposed treatments will implement INFISH buffers. No fire ignition will occur within 300 feet of fish-bearing streams; 150 feet of non-fish bearing perennial streams or 100 feet of non-fish bearing intermittent streams. The Clearwater/ Nez Perce NF programmatic Biological Assessment guidelines for threatened and endangered fish will be used, and no burning will be initiated in riparian areas. However, fire that "backs" into riparian zones will be allowed to burn, since higher fuel moistures in riparian areas typically limits fire impacts/spread in these zones. INFISH buffers will prevent direct sediment input through overland flow. Low to mixed severity burns will result in live tree retention, which will minimize the increase in water yields.
2. Burn boundaries are located outside of old growth habitat. No ignitions will take place in designated old growth stands. Fire may back into and creep around old growth areas, potentially cleaning up jackpots of fuels. Ignition may occur in non-designated mature and old growth forest habitat patches, with the intent to create low to mixed severity burns.
3. Smoke management will be coordinated with the North Idaho and Montana Airshed Groups to ensure compliance with the Clean Air Act.
4. Trailheads and roads within the project area will be posted with informational signs well prior to the planned ignition dates. Local outfitters will be informed by personal contacts. Notice of upcoming burns will be provided on the Forest website and via the local media through news releases.
5. Maintain less than 5% of the streamside RHCA burned at high severity with these patches not highly concentrated.
6. Biological weed control areas will be excluded from ignition areas. Known weed infestations will be avoided where possible. Any burning in these areas is expected to be lower intensity fire that backs into the areas.
7. No direct ignition will take place in E1 management areas. These small areas were included only due to topography along the project boundary.

Small NEPA IDT/resource specialists are listed below. Contact them if you have any questions regarding their resource for your project.

Botany – Mike Hays, mike.hays@usda.gov; 983-4028
Fisheries – Derrick Bawdon, derrick.bawdon@usda.gov; 963-4211
Heritage – Christy Mog, christy.mog@usda.gov; 935-4269
Hydrology – Cynthia Valle, cynthis.valle@usda.gov; 963-4203
Minerals – Marty Jones, martin.jones@usda.gov; 983-5158
Recreation – Carol Hennessey, cahennessey@fs.fed.us; 935-4270
Soils – Alex Rozin, alexandra.rozin@usda.gov, 842-2100
Wild and Scenic River – Chris Noyes, chris.noyes@usda.gov; 935-4251
Wildlife – Jim Lutes, james.r.lutes@usda.gov; 963-4202

Small NEPA Planner – Jeff Chynoweth, james.chynoweth@usda.gov; 935-4260

PROJECT MAPS

Please send – separate from this form and per the instructions outlined below – a GIS-generated map or maps of the project area (pdf format only) with the project submission email.

- Make sure that the map layers can be turned on / off / are editable.
- Make sure the map(s) fits on an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper.

Provide at least one map, preferably "portrait" orientation, with the project area / features as:

- a Point, e.g. culvert, bridge, etc.,
- a Line, e.g. fence, road, creek, etc., and/or
- a Polygon, e.g. stand boundaries, treatment areas, etc.
    - Do not use a point if treating an area, use a polygon.
    - Points/lines/polygons need to be distinct and easily found on the map.
    - The project area / site needs to be centered on the map, especially if only one area/feature.

Please use the Forest Visitor Map as your map's base layer.

- Do not add contour lines to the FV map unless needed for clarifying the proposed action. Contour lines can make the map difficult to read.
    - If contour lines are needed, make sure they are distinguishable from other linear features such as roads, trails, streams, etc.
- A topo map can be substituted for the FV map. If using a topo map but the contour lines are not important the topo lines should be light gray or opaque.
- Regardless of base map, make sure there are identifiable elements, e.g. towns, roads, streams, etc. on the map to help locate the project area on the landscape and that the elements are clearly labeled.

The preferred map scale (typically 1:24K) is whatever scale best presents the project area's location and proposed activities:

- If the 1:24K scale is too small (i.e. the project feature(s) – point/line/polygon – would be hard to find or would be indistinguishable on just one map), use a larger scale to show the overall project area (coarse scale map) and smaller scaled maps to show the project features (fine scale map).
- If the 1:24K scale is too big (i.e. the project feature is a tiny point or thin line lost/hard to find on the larger landscape), use a smaller scale to highlight the feature while ensuring there are elements on the map to identify the project's location.
- If you need to make additional maps, please make as few as possible.

At a minimum, all maps should include (with the preferred but not set in stone location on the map):

- a Title (project name and district name only (please); centered at top)
- a Legend (features clearly labeled; lower right corner)
- a Scale (in half mile, e.g. 0__0.25__0.5 miles, or full miles, e.g. 0__0.25__0.5__1.0 miles; lower left corner)
- a North Arrow (upper right corner)
    - Display all of the above in boxes with black outlines and a white backgrounds (not gray or yellow)
    - Do not 'Halo' the text or numbers or anything else on the map. Please.
    - The Scale needs to be large enough to read the numbers.

Finally, please include the mapmakers name and the date it was created on the map.

The Map(s) you provide will be used for Scoping the Public and the Tribes and in the Decision document. Please make sure they show – clearly, effectively, and professionally – what activity or activities are being proposed and where they are located on the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests.

SHAPEFILES

The resource specialists require the shapefile(s) of the project's proposed activities before they will conduct their analyses. Providing the shapefile does not substitute for providing a pdf map.

The Project Proponent needs to send the shapefile, or a location where the shapefile can be found, to the Small NEPA Planner (currently: jjchynoweth@fs.fed.us) by the time or shortly after the District Ranger submits this form.

- Shapefiles need to include the Project Name and have the Feature (culvert, bridge, etc.) labeled.
- Shapefiles need to include the following extensions – .dbf, .prj, .sbn, .shp, .shx, and .xml.

PROPONENT: When submitting the shapefile(s) you must include in the email how the location(s) of the project feature(s), i.e. line, point, and/or polygon, were determined (see below):

- Field-collected GPS data;
- From existing corporate GIS data (provide name of GIS layer);
- Created (digitized) from an aerial photo;
- Created (digitized) from the existing corporate GIS data;
- Created (digitized) from the NPCLW Visitor Map;
- Other (describe).

Projects in Roadless Area

What is the Inventoried Roadless Area name? Hoodoo and Bighorn-Weitas	**Forest Plan IRA Name *(if different)*:**
Identify the Idaho Roadless Management Classification: • *Wild Land Recreation* • *Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance* • *Primitive* • *Backcountry Restoration* • *General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland*	**Classification(s):** Wild Land Recreation (Hoodoo) Backcountry Restoration (B-W) Special Areas of Historic or Tribal significance (B-W)
Does the project involve constructing or reconstructing roads? Yes* (No) * If yes, see *http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2* then navigate to Subpart C 294.23	
Does the project involve cutting trees? Yes* (No) * *If yes, see http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2* then navigate to Subpart C 294.24	
Does the project involve removing minerals, including common variety minerals? Yes* (No) * *If yes, see http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2* then navigate to Subpart C 294.25	

JC : 9/16/2019

Additional Information: